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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000675

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2015

TAGS: PREL PHUM BA

SUBJECT: FORUM FOR FUTURE: BMENA PARTICIPATION URGED AT GLENEAGLES

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe. Reason: 1.4 (B)(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Bahrain Crown Prince Shaikh Salman told delegations attending a May 10 preparatory meeting for the November Forum for the Future that continued G-8 engagement and support was essential in helping maintain reform momentum in the region. Jordan Minister of Finance Awad-Allah, speaking for the group, told the Crown Prince that the November meeting needed to show concrete results. He praised the symbolic importance achieved by the U.S. invitation to Arab participants at last year's Sea Island Summit, and hoped for a similar commitment this year. British head of delegation Frances Guy acknowledged invitations for the Gleneagles Summit had to date focused on the UK's priority issues of climate change and Africa, but promised to take the message back about the importance of Arab participation as well. PDAS Cheney outlined two U.S. initiatives for the November Forum: Foundation for the Future and Fund for the Future. End summary.

¶2. (U) At the close of the morning session of a May 10 steering committee meeting convened in Manama to discuss and plan for the November Forum for the Future meeting (to be reported septel), Crown Prince Shaikh Salman Al-Khalifa asked to meet with the delegation members. Participating in the meeting were officials from the U.S., U.K., and Russia (representing the former, current, and next G-8 presidencies), as well Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt. The U.S. delegation was headed by NEA PDAS Cheney and DAS Carpenter.

¶3. (C) Crown Prince Salman opened the meeting by thanking the delegations for their efforts in preparing for the Forum for the Future meeting, which will be held this year in Bahrain. He stressed that G-8 support and engagement in this effort was invaluable. The introduction of President Bush's freedom agenda and moves toward the emancipation of women, he said, are big developments for the region. If the international community is there to support the reform effort, difficulties in implementing these reforms can be resolved. If the international community is not there, implementation could be more difficult and dangerous. Maintaining the momentum will be critical.

¶4. (C) Jordan Minister of Finance Bassim Awad-Allah expressed thanks to the Government of Bahrain for volunteering to host the second Forum for the Future meeting, and said he wanted to make two points. First, it was extremely important that the November meeting produce results. Middle East countries, especially those like Bahrain, Jordan and Morocco that have pioneered reform in the region, need to be able to show that this partnership with the G-8 is paying off with concrete achievements. Second, it is important that the G-8 countries demonstrate that they are maintaining their political commitment to the reform process in the region. The BMENA countries are grateful to the U.S. for demonstrating this commitment, including by inviting Arab participation in the Sea Island Summit last June. This commitment needs to be reaffirmed this year.

¶5. (C) The Crown Prince asked if similar participation is being planned for the upcoming Gleneagles Summit. British head of delegation Frances Guy (Head of Engaging with the Islamic World Group in the FCO) responded that, while the focus on this year's summit would be climate change and Africa, it did not mean any lessening of the commitment to the issue of reform in the BMENA region. Noting, however, that invitations at this point all focused on climate change and Africa, she said that she well understood the message she was hearing (which had also been delivered by several participants at the steering committee meeting earlier in the day), and would take it back to London.

¶6. (C) Bahrain Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr. Mohammed Abdel Ghaffar briefly reviewed for the Crown Prince some of the issues discussed during the morning session, including the question of civil society participation, and expressed appreciation to the USG for proposing two new initiatives to be launched at the November Forum meeting. PDAS Cheney described the two initiatives: the Foundation for the Future, which aims to fund projects in support of political reform and civil society, and the Fund for the Future, which aims particularly at helping finance small and medium-sized enterprises. If we can get these two

initiatives up and running by November, she said, we will have two concrete achievements at the Bahrain Forum for the Future meeting.

¶7. (U) This message was cleared by PDAS Cheney.
MONROE